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From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim:
The Articulation of Ismaili Khoja Identity in South Asia*

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Ali S. Asani

(Harvard University)

The historian Bernard Lewis writes that in the course of its evolution, Ismailism 'has meant different things at different times and places'.[1] A principal reason for the multivalent significance of the tradition has been its remarkable ability to adapt to different contexts and circumstances. Depending on the historical period and geographical/cultural location, Ismaili intellectuals, poets and preachers have expressed the central doctrines of their faith within a variety of theologies and philosophical systems. In the late 10th and early 11th centuries, for example, Fatimid Ismaili thinkers engaged in a philosophical synthesis of Neoplatonic and Gnostic elements to elaborate Islamic and, specifically, Ismaili ideas.[2] As a consequence of centuries-old processes of acculturation to varying milieus, Ismaili communities have come to display significant diversity in their beliefs and practices. Indeed, the 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, commenting on the pliable nature of Ismailism, observed that the tradition has survived 'because it has always been fluid. Rigidity is contrary to our whole way of life and outlook. There have really been no cut-and-dried rules'.[3]

Some scholars have attributed the Ismaili tendency to acculturate to different contexts to the doctrine of *taqiyya*, the strategy traditionally used by Shi'i groups to hide or camouflage their religious beliefs in order to escape persecution. Historically, the Ismailis rank among the most ruthlessly persecuted minorities of the Muslim world, frequently forced into 'an underground existence'.[4] During certain historical periods, the intensity with which they were persecuted was such that entire communities were wiped out. One is reminded of the infamous edict of the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan against Ismailis in which he commanded that 'none of that people should be spared, not even the

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From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim:

The Articulation of Ismaili Khoja Identity in South Asia*

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The historian Bernard Lewis writes that in the course of its evolution, Ismailism 'has meant different things at different times and places'.[1] A principal reason for the multivalent significance of the tradition has been its remarkable ability to adapt to different contexts and circumstances. Depending on the historical period and geographical/cultural location, Ismaili intellectuals, poets and preachers have expressed the central doctrines of their faith within a variety of theologies and philosophical systems. In the late 10th and early 11th centuries, for example, Fatimid Ismaili thinkers engaged in a philosophical synthesis of Neoplatonic and Gnostic elements to elaborate Islamic and, specifically, Ismaili ideas.[2] As a consequence of centuries-old processes of acculturation to varying milieus, Ismaili communities have come to display significant diversity in their beliefs and practices. Indeed, the 48th Imam of the Nizari Ismailis, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, commenting on the pliable nature of Ismailism, observed that the tradition has survived 'because it has always been fluid. Rigidity is contrary to our whole way of life and outlook. There have really been no cut-and-dried rules'.[3]

Some scholars have attributed the Ismaili tendency to acculturate to different contexts to the doctrine of *taqiyya*, the strategy traditionally used by Shi'i groups to hide or camouflage their religious beliefs in order to escape persecution. Historically, the Ismailis rank among the most ruthlessly persecuted minorities of the Muslim world, frequently forced into 'an underground existence'.[4] During certain historical periods, the intensity with which they were persecuted was such that entire communities were wiped out. One is reminded of the infamous edict of the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan against Ismailis in which he commanded that 'none of that people should be spared, not even the

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babe in its cradle'.[5] Yet, it is also evident that the impulse to acculturate is innate to the ethos of Ismailism. A distinctive element contributing to this ethos is the strong emphasis on the *batin* (the spiritual and esoteric) over the *zahir* (the physical and exoteric). As a result, the Ismailis have been called the *batiniyya,* 'the followers of the esoteric, the inner'. This has meant that externals of culture, such as language or dress, have not been considered essential to Ismaili articulations of faith and identity.

Central to Ismaili traditions of esotericism has been the notion that a single spiritual reality underlies what may appear externally to be starkly different and disparate doctrines and creeds. As a result, Ismailism has been able to respond to cultural diversity by tolerating, in the words of Paul E. Walker, 'a surprising intellectual flexibility and leeway'.[6] The motivation to integrate, reformulate and acculturate to different environments is hence specifically part of the Ismaili legacy.[7] One of the consequences of this legacy is that during many periods of their history, the religious identities of many Ismaili communities were often ambiguous and difficult to define since they drew upon and integrated many different ideologies. For instance, in 9th and 10th century Egypt, Ismaili preachers incorporated Jewish and Judeo-Christian motifs in their teachings and applied esoteric Ismaili interpretations to the Hebrew Bible, Jewish law and messianic doctrines, leading to the emergence of what Joel Kraemer has provocatively termed "Jewish Ismailism."[8] Similarly, Ismaili authors in Persia and Central Asia, from the 15th century onwards, used prevailing Sufi discourses to explain their doctrines, resulting in a style that Wladimir Ivanow, the prominent scholar of Ismaili history, has described as a 'Sufico-Ismaili' because it created ambiguities surrounding not only the religious affiliation of authors of the treatises, but about doctrinal issues as well.[9]

Not surprisingly, ambiguity in identity has been a prominent characteristic of Nizari Ismaili communities in the western regions of the Indian subcontinent, namely Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Rajasthan. According to community traditions, the emergence and development of the Nizari Ismaili tradition was associated with various *pirs* and *sayyid*s who, from the 11th century onwards, were entrusted the responsibility of propagating Ismaili doctrines in the area by Ismaili Imams residing in Iran. Significantly, these *pir*s and *sayyid*s referred to their teachings as *satpanth*, 'the true path'. Hence their followers identified themselves as Satpanthis rather than Ismailis. The Satpanth tradition

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employed terms and ideas from a variety of Indic religious and philosophical currents, such as the Bhakti, Sant, Sufi, Vaishnavite and yogic traditions to articulate its core concepts.[10] Consequently, as we shall see below, those who followed Satpanth understood it through multiple lenses and were not confined to rigid or conventionally defined doctrinal and theological boundaries.

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This essay explores the processes by which the identity of a group of Satpanthis, called the Khojahs, originally members of a small mercantile caste in western India, was gradually transformed over a period of some one hundred and fifty years so that a significant number today regard themselves as Shi ʿ i Muslims, specifically Nizari Ismailis, members of a transnational religious community led by the Aga Khans. In the pre-modern period, the Khojas were, to use Faisal Devji's apt description, simultaneously 'a Vaishnav *panth*, a Sufi order, a trader's guild and a caste'.[11] In the 19th and early 20th centuries, however, the presence of these multiple strands became problematic for them as new socio-political frameworks, associated with the establishment of British imperial rule and the emergence of religiously based nationalisms, became increasingly dominant in South Asia. In a tense and polarized atmosphere in which notions of religious identity and the categories 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' were contested and also rigidly and narrowly demarcated, the Khojas, like many other Indian communities, were pressured to reshape their identity to better conform to externally defined norms. To complicate matters, internal dissent among the Khojas over issues of authority and governance led to the intervention of the colonial courts of British India. As a result, schisms developed among the Khojas and they splintered along religious (Hindu/Muslim) as well as sectarian (Sunni/Shiʿi) lines. For those Khojas who, in the aftermath of these divisions, came to identify themselves as Ismailis, the Aga Khans employed the sanction of their office as hereditary Shi ʿ i Imams (spiritual leaders) to affect the process of identity transformation from Indic caste to Muslim denomination.[12] The story of the Khojas is narrated from two perspectives: first, by exploring their identity within the changing landscapes of pre-colonial, colonial and post- colonial South Asia and, second, by examining the impact of identity transformation on their devotional life and literatures, especially the *ginan*s, a genre of devotional poems that has been quintessential to Satpanthi and Khoja identity.

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Locating Khoja Identity within Changing Contexts

The pre-colonial experience

During the course of its historical development, the Satpanth tradition evolved into several branches. As a result, Satpanthis were divided into various sub-groups such as the Khojas, Shamsis, Nijyapanthis (Nizarpanthis), Momnas, Imamshahis, Mahamargis and Barmatis (Maheswaris). Each sub-group adopted a distinctive identity centred on the particular *pir* or *sayyid* it followed as well as the occupation or profession of its members. The Khojas, the subject of this essay, are said to be disciples of the 15th-century Pir Sadr al-Din, the most prominent of the Satpanthi *pir*s. According to Azim Nanji, Pir Sadr al-Din appears to have played a key role in organizing and consolidating the Satpanth tradition. To him are attributed the greatest number of *ginan*s, the establishment of the first *jama'at-khana* (house of congregation) and the invention of Khojki script (a secretive alphabet for recording religious texts and keeping commercial accounts).[13] Khoja traditions assert that they belonged originally to trading castes of Sind and Gujarat, principally the Lohanas and Bhatias. Upon their joining Satpanth, Pir Sadr al-Din is said to have given his new disciples the title '*khwajah*' (a Persian term of which Khoja is a corruption) to replace the original Lohana '*thakkur,*' both meaning 'lord' or 'master'.[14] The intent behind the new title was apparently to bestow a caste-like status on his followers, a concession to their social milieu in which caste was fundamental in defining status and societal relationships. Before the name of an individual, the title '*khwajah*' served to indicate simultaneously occupational (merchant), social and religious identities.

Evidence from British Gazetteers indicates that in early 19th-century Bombay, the Khojas functioned socially as an endogamous caste. They had regular meetings to which adult males were summoned by a crier who went through the streets in Khoja neighbourhoods. At such gatherings, all kinds of disputes, including those related to marriages, were presented for arbitration. In case of violation of caste norms, members could vote on excommunication. There were also special caste dinners for which the group, as a corporate entity, owned its own cooking utensils.[15] In nomenclature and social customs they did not differ much from their Lohana and Bhatia brethren. *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* remarks that in northeast Kathiawar, Khojas were still

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addressed by the Lohana title *thakkur* and wore their waistcoasts in the Lohana fashion.[16] Like other mercantile communities in the region, they had their own writing system, Khojki, which was a refined form of Lohanaki, the script used by the Lohanas.[17] In personal law, the group was, according to Hamid ʿAli 'caught within the meshes of Hindu customary law'.[18] Widow remarriage, as in the case of many Indian castes, was a strict taboo, while inheritance of property was limited only to males.[19]

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In terms of their religious lives, the Khojas integrated multiple beliefs that were at once complementary and contradictory. One of the mainstays of their devotional life was the singing of *ginan*s, hymn-like poems which the *pirs* and *sayyid*s are said to have composed in various local languages to propagate the teachings of Satpanth in a manner that they could be best understood by local populations. The term *ginan* is derived from the Sanskrit word for 'knowledge,' in the sense of esoteric truth or wisdom; hence the *ginan*s may perhaps be best understood as hymns of esoteric wisdom.[20] In the *ginan*s, the *pir*s and *sayyid*s translated the core concepts of Satpanth, in particular that of the Imam, into one or more of four religious discourses prevalent in western India. The choice of discourse and the terms and idioms employed varied, depending on various factors such as the period of composition, doctrinal and thematic content, and the historical context of the audience. As a result, the formulation of Satpanthi doctrine in the *ginan*s was multilayered and multivalent in character.

Some of the earliest *ginan*s, such as the *Dasa Avatara,* often hailed as a Satpanth classic, created an ostensible equivalence between the Vaishnava Hindu concept of *avatara* and the Ismaili concept of *imam*. Kalki, the messianic tenth incarnation (*dasa avatara)* of Vishnu, renamed in the Satpanth tradition as *Nakalanki*, 'the stainless one,' was identified with ʿAli, the first Shiʿi Imam. In such *ginan*s, the *pir*s represented themselves as guides who knew the whereabouts of the long awaited tenth *avatara* of Vishnu, meaning the Ismaili Imam who they proclaimed was living in the west (Iran). They also 'translated' the concept of the Qur'an as divine scripture into an Indic cultural framework by describing it as the last of the Vedas. As a result, these *ginan*s portray Satpanth as the completion or culmination of the Vaishnavite Hindu tradition.

Other *ginan*s formulated their teachings within a Sufi framework, reiterating a relationship between Sufism and Ismaili thought found in Iran, especially after the 13th

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century.[21] Several Sufi orders, particularly the Suhrawardiyya and the Qadiriyya, had a significant presence in the areas in which the *pir*s and *sayyid*s were most active, namely in Punjab and Sind. The use of Sufi terminology in the Satpanthi tradition served, therefore, to emphasize its close links with traditions of Islamic mysticism. The Ismaili Imams, and their representatives the *pir*s, were portrayed as spiritually enlightened teachers who could guide the spiritual development of each disciple (*murid*). With the aid of spiritual practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of the divine names), the guide (*murshid*) prepared the disciple for experiencing the ultimate goal of Islamic mysticism – the 'face to face encounter with God,' or *didar*, 'vision of the divine'. As keeper of the mysteries of *batin*, the esoteric, the Imam became not only the guide, but often also the object of the spiritual quest, in which one encounters spiritually the light (*nur*) of the Imam, who is frequently referred to as ʿAli. In this context, ʿAli refers not merely to the historic person, but is symbolic of all the Imams and, indeed, the 'light of imamate', a pre-eternal and cosmic light believed to be inherited by all Shiʿi Imams following ʿAli.[22] A fine illustration of a *ginan* that adopts such a Sufi framework is the *Bujh Niranjan*, a lengthy composition in medieval Hindi describing the stages and states of spiritual development using technical Sufi terms drawn from the Persian and Arabic tradition.[23]

A third discourse found within the *ginan*s is that of the Sants, a group of lower caste 'poet-saints' who were part of a powerful anti-ritual and anti-caste movement that swept across India contemporaneously with the Satpanthi tradition. Around some of the Sants crystallized formal organizations or *panth*s, similar to Sufi orders or fraternities. Each *panth* consisted of disciples who had dedicated themselves to following the teachings of a particular Sant and his descendants. Guru Nanak, commonly regarded today as the 'founder' of the Sikh religion, was one such Sant and the path he preached was initially called *Nanakpanth*. Indeed, there are strong parallels between the evolution of *Nanakpanth* into a formal 'religion' that is known as Sikhism today, and the Satpanth tradition and its later evolution into various modern sectarian forms of Islam and Hinduism. The very name Satpanth was meant to resonate with the larger Sant tradition, the Imams and *pir*s being perceived as *satguru*s, 'true guides'. Adopting much of the idiom of Sant poetry, the *ginan*s challenge the efficacy of ritualism and rote learning as paths to salvation. Instead, they urged the faithful to follow the right path (*Satpanth*) by

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adopting a righteous lifestyle, recognizing the transitory nature of the world (*maya*) and the evils of attachment to it. Knowledge of true reality is only possible through regular constant remembrance (*sumiran*) of the divine name (*nam/shabd*) given to those who follow the true path by the *Satguru*, the true guide ambiguously identified in most *ginan*s as either the *pir* or Shah (the Imam), or both. The *pir*s and *sayyid*s who composed the *ginan*s are depicted as teachers (*guru*s) who guided them to the path of spiritual enlightenment (*darshan*/*didar*) and liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

The Bhakti tradition, a movement of devotionalism prevalent in north India, provided a fourth framework of expression. Bhakti vocabulary was used by the *pir*s for expressing one of the core concepts of Satpanth: the relationship of devotion between disciples and the Imam. Not only was the Imam a guide, a repository of knowledge and divine light, but also the object of love and veneration. Indeed, for many of his followers, love and devotion to the Imam are absolutely essential for the attainment of the spiritual vision and union for which the believer yearns. The most powerful representative of devotion in Bhakti poetry is the *virahini*, the woman longing for her beloved, best exemplified by Radha and the *gopi*s (cowmaids) in their longing for Krishna. In the *ginan*s, the *virahini* becomes symbolic of the human soul who experiences *viraha* (painful longing) for the beloved, almost always identified as the Imam. As a result, many *ginan*s portray the believer as a *virahini*, waiting expectantly for the return of the beloved from whom she has been separated. An interesting consequence of the prevalence of the *virahini* symbolism is that many *ginan*s are written in a feminine voice, although their authors are predominantly male.[24]

The multiple understandings of the doctrine of Imam among the Khojas were echoed in their eclectic religious practices as documented in the early 19th century. In addition to performing Islamic rituals of mixed sectarian origins, they recited during their religious ceremonies the Satpanthi ginan *Dasa Avatara*, referred to earlier. In terms of their prayers, they performed the traditional Arabic *namaz* on the two ʿIds; otherwise, they had their own ritual prayer in the Gujarati language with a liberal sprinkling of Arabic and Persian phrases which they recited thrice a day.[25] Their funeral ceremonies, as well as their marriages, were performed by Sunni officiants.[26] Yet, the Khojas were clearly Shiʿi by virtue of their reverence for ʿAli, the first Shiʿi Imam. They venerated their

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Imams in Iran as his descendants, regularly sending tributes to them and, if possible, undertaking the arduous pilgrimage to see them in person.[27] They also participated in all the traditional Shi'i rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn during the month of Muharram. Those Khojas who could afford the expense would have the bodies of their dead shipped to Karbala in Iraq for burial near the shrine of Husayn.[28] The significance of Karbala for the Khojas was further underscored by the fact that in a purificatory ritual called *ghat paat*, resembling that performed by Shaktipanthi Lohanas, they sipped holy water in which small pills of Karbala clay were dissolved.[29]

Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir remark that the world-view of Satpanth, although drawn from seemingly disparate sources, is remarkably coherent, representing 'a creative achievement of the religious imagination perhaps more remarkable than that seemingly syncretic grafting of Hindu ideas on an Islamic base of a very individual type which has tended to attract disproportionate and sometimes dismissive comment in the analysis of outsiders'.[30] On the other hand, W. Ivanow has characterized Satpanth as 'a transition between Ismailism, Sufism and Hinduism'.[31] On account of the uniquely constructed multivalent Satpanthi formulation, the Khojas could effectively participate in several social identities simultaneously and navigate between them with fluidity: they were members of a mercantile group who followed Satpanth, 'the true path,' a tradition that could be simultaneously be understood within both Islamic and Indic doctrinal frameworks. They owed allegiance to their *pir/imam/murshid*, a descendant of 'Ali residing in Iran. It was to him that they expressed devotion using the symbols and idioms taken from the love poetry associated with Krishna and the *gopi*s.

In many ways, pre-colonial Khojas represented a creative model of engagement with diversity that may be partially understood through Tony Stewart's 'translation theory' as a basis for understanding encounters between traditions. Following this hermeneutic model, we may regard the use of multiple discourses in the Satpanthi tradition as an attempt on the part of those who composed *ginan*s 'to be understood, to make themselves understood,' in several different religious 'languages' depending on the context they were addressing.[32] Within the context of colonial India, as religious identities came to be essentialized and religious difference between Hindus and Muslims

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became a source of socio-cultural polarization, 'multilingual' doctrinal and social formulations such as those of Satpanth became difficult, if not impossible, to sustain.

The Khojas in colonial spaces

One of the features of modernity in South Asia is the ideological use of religion to categorize communities based on their adherence to a distinctive set of practices and doctrines. The British, who were to play a dominant role in South Asia from the mid-19th century onwards, 'understood organized religious life as constituted in the Church of England….Hindus and Muslims were expected to be homogeneous as if they were single churches'.[33] As a result of their encounter with European conceptions of religions as distinct ideologies, many inhabitants of South Asia came to regard Islam and Hinduism as fixed monolithic entities, with their respective adherents separated from each other by well-defined boundaries. Traditions that seemed to combine elements of both, therefore, came to be seen as anomalous and even deviant. No doubt the widespread presence of 'Hindu-Muhammadan' groups of indeterminate religious identity was confusing to British officials who lamented the lack of 'pure Moslems' in India.[34] Naturally, the Khojas, with the pluralistic character of their practices and 'multilingual' discourses through which they understood their faith, were difficult to categorize, creating many quandaries. For example, Hamid Ali comments that their legal position was such that it was 'as baffling to the [colonial] law courts as it (was) to the legislature'.[35] Were they Muslim or Hindu? If Muslim, then what kind of Islam did they practise? Not only was the exact nature of their religious identity questioned, but occasionally it also elicited rather caustic judgements. For example, a British colonial officer, Sir Bartle Frere, noted that the Khojas were considered heretical by many Muslims because they engaged in 'various remnants of idolatrous and mystical worship'.[36] Defining Khoja identity was, and continues to remain, problematic for academics as well. For instance, the late Aziz Ahmad, a scholar of South Asian Islam, grouped them along with other 'syncretic' sects of indeterminate identity, declaring that their chief interest was as 'curiosities of mushroom religious growth,'[37] who added 'color to the bizarre pageantry of India'.[38] Ordinary Muslims and Hindus, he further remarked, considered such communities to be 'spiritual freaks'.[39] Clearly the unique blend of Khoja beliefs and customs was

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bewildering to outsiders. But by the mid 19th century, it was becoming perplexing internally as well. In 1847, Hubib Ebrahim, a Khoja witness in an inheritance case, declared to a British judge:'Some say we are Soonees [Sunnis], some Sheas [Shi'a]. Our religion is a separate religion, Aga Khan is esteemed as a great man amongst us. Since we keep beards we are Mahommedans [Muslims], our religion is a different religion'.[40]

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In the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century, two sets of factors triggered a series of changes which led to the Khojas redefining themselves to better fit new and more narrowly defined categories of identity. The first set of factors was external to the community and related to the establishment of British colonial rule in India. The very 'idiom' of this rule, as Peter Hardy terms it, was communalist, systematically institutionalizing India into a nation of discrete communities defined along religious lines through various bureaucratic practices.[41] Census and ethnographic surveys highlighted religious rather than other markers of identity, forcing people to identify themselves primarily in religious terms. Through such colonial instruments, the peoples of the subcontinent began to perceive themselves as belonging to distinct communities defined along religious lines. Consequently, many traditionally antagonistic sectarian groups and separately organized collectives were represented in the single category of either Hindu or Muslim.[42] Muslim elites, for example, started to view all the Muslims in India, notwithstanding their significant ethnic, linguistic, social and sectarian differences, as forming a single monolithic community united by their religion. Eventually, in an atmosphere infused with nationalist ideologies, some Muslim and Hindu leaders began to see religious communities as constituting distinct nations. It is this conception that led to demands for the partition of the subcontinent on the basis of the two-nation theory.

British rule also brought with it Western culture and new institutions, particularly schools and colleges, many run by Christian missionaries, dedicated to promoting Western models of education and European lifestyles. This development prompted a general concern among many Muslims because it was perceived as a potential threat to Muslim identity. In response, revivalist and reformist movements calling for fresh interpretations of Islam emerged, offering a spectrum of definitions concerning the maintenance of Islamic identity in the colonial context.[43] Many of these definitions, ranging from liberal to ultraconservative, sought to differentiate sharply Muslim from

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non-Muslim using as guides the Qur'an, the *sunna* (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad, and the traditions of the first generation of Muslims. None of them had space for the multivalent identity projected by communities like the Khojas. Such groups were perceived as 'syncretic', inhabiting ' a half-way house between Islam and Hinduism,' and who would have to align their conception of Islam in terms of the majority community. The exercise of their faith would have to conform to externally defined notions of orthopraxy.[44] Practices and ideas, particularly those inherited from local Indian traditions, came to be regarded as innovations and, therefore, 'non-Islamic'. Consequently, the late 19th and 20th centuries witnessed individuals, groups and entire villages being targeted for reform by grassroots Muslim reformers, such as the Faraizis, who sought to eliminate a whole range of practices, customs and ideas among Muslims that they considered 'Hindu' or 'un-Islamic'.[45] Conversely, Hindu reformists, particularly groups such as the Arya Samaj, produced aggressive propaganda that was aimed at 're-Hinduizing' groups they considered to be Hindu in origin. Among the targets for 'Hinduization' were Satpanthi groups. In 1913-14, the Arya Samaj embarked on a vigorous campaign to encourage the Guptis, a group who were outwardly Hindu but inwardly Satpanthi, to undergo the *shuddhi* 'purification' ceremony so that they could become proper Hindus.[46]As a result of such campaigns, some Satpanthi groups such as the Nijyapanthis and the Imamshahis, as Dominique-Sila Khan has shown, eventually came to identify themselves as Hindus.[47]

Suspicion of local indigenous cultures to be 'un-Islamic' or 'Hindu' and the privileging of 'Arabo-Persian' elements as 'Islamic' radically changed perceptions of cultural elements such as language, literature, dress, music and dance. As these began to be viewed through the politicized lens of religious ideology, they were subject to either 'Islamization' or 'Sanskritization', which ultimately resulted in cultural polarization between Hindu and Muslim communities. As increasingly more elements of culture came to be perceived as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim,' the area of shared cultural space between Muslims and Hindus in certain parts of India shrunk.[48] In this way, communities came to be demarcated on the basis of rigidly defined cultural boundaries. For instance, just as the Hindu nationalists felt it was no longer possible for Hindu poets to write in Urdu which they perceived as an 'Islamic' language, Muslim nationalists felt it inappropriate for

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Muslim poets to write in Hindi, a 'Hindu' language. The sociologist Imtiaz Ahmed correctly observes that the ultimate result of such processes was a disjunction that had a profound significance in shaping interaction among Muslims and Hindus by sharpening cultural differences between them.[49]

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In this tense milieu, groups such as the Khojas, who had articulated their identity using concepts and formulations that were uncommon by the standards of '*shari'a*-oriented' and Arabo-Persian perceptions of Islam, were forced to clarify their position vis-à-vis the general Muslim community. This, then, marks the beginning of a period of sustained dialogue and engagement of the Khojas with other Muslim groups in South Asia. It became necessary for them to articulate their beliefs and practices within frameworks that conformed to constructions of religious identity prevalent in the larger Muslim world.

A second set of factors that was responsible for the reorientation of Khoja identity related to developments internal to the Khojas. Specifically, these were consequences of the move in 1841 of Hasan ʿAli Shah, Aga Khan I , the 46th Nizari Ismaili Imam to India. Following political disturbances in Iran, historically the seat of the Nizari imamate for several centuries, Aga Khan I came first to Sind where he allied himself with the British. After a short stay in Calcutta, he settled in Bombay, the site of the largest settlement of Khojas at the time. Historically, the Khojas had a tradition of sending tributes to the Aga Khan's ancestors in Iran through specially designated emissaries. Some had even undertaken the arduous overland journey to Iran to pay their personal respects to their *pir/murshid*. Notwithstanding this spiritual allegiance, when it came to conducting their internal affairs, the Khojas had been rather autonomous. For instance, the managing of caste property in Bombay, including the *jamaʿat-khana*s, was the responsibility of a select group of Khoja commercial magnates who formed a kind of council of elders (*justi*). In addition to the *justi*, the elected *mukhi* (chief) and *kamaria* (treasurer), as well as a *sayyid*/*vakil*, were central figures of authority in the caste.[50] Their duties included the collection of religious dues from caste members for transmission to the Imams in Iran. Already in the early 19th century, some of the more progressive minded magnates had been instrumental in instituting 'modern' reforms among the Khojas, such as the introduction of English in their schools.[51]

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Soon after his arrival, Aga Khan I began asserting his own authority over all matters related to the Khojas. For instance, he began instituting changes to some of their practices and customs, insisting on stronger participation in Shi'i rituals. In 1847, in keeping with traditional Shi'a religious law, he championed a change supporting a daughter's right to inherit a share in her father's property rather than the traditional Khoja practice which did not allow daughters to inherit.[52] He also began to assert control over communally owned Khoja property, a move which upset the upper echelons of the Khoja hierarchy. Resenting his authority, some members of the Khoja elite challenged his control as well as his right to receive tribute from them.[53]

British colonial courts became the arena where the furious battles between the Aga Khan and his opponents were fought. Not being able to settle matters amongst themselves, the aggrieved parties filed numerous suits. A common strategy in these cases was for the opponents to challenge the Aga Khan's authority over the Khojas by questioning their religious identity. Thus, the dissenters claimed that the Khojas were originally Sunni and accused the Aga Khan of propagating 'heretical' ideas to bolster his authority. In response, the Aga Khan asked those faithful to him to sign a document in which they pledged to desist from Sunni rites and perform their Shi'a faith openly. He further instructed them that they no longer had to observe *taqiyya* (dissimulation of beliefs) as under British rule the exercise of all religions was free. The majority of the Khojas signed the document.[54]

Several years of further strife between the followers of the Aga Khan and his opponents culminated in the Aga Khan Case of 1866 in which the Bombay High Court undertook the daunting task of defining Khoja identity. In a lengthy landmark judgement, the presiding judge, Justice Arnould, provided validation to the Aga Khan's authority over the Khojas:

> ….a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindu in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shia Imami Ismailis, which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imam of the Ismailis.[55]

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Unable to abide by this judgement, the Aga Khan's opponents joined the Sunni fold, calling themselves Sunni Khojas.

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In the late 19th century and early 20th centuries, a period when Sultan Muhammed Shah, Aga Khan III (d. 1957), was the Ismaili Imam, the community's sectarian boundaries were further narrowed as a result of another court case. This time the dissenters, who included Haji Bibi, a cousin of the Aga Khan, and other members of his extended family, claimed that the Aga Khan was, like themselves, Ithnaʿashari (Twelver Shiʿi) by faith. His authority over the Khojas was that of a traditional Sufi *pir,* not a Shiʿi Imam, and as such, they too were entitled to a share of the revenue he received from the Khojas. The Aga Khan, by asserting his exclusive authority over the Khojas, the dissenters claimed, had invented a new religion. In 1908, a British judge presiding over the Haji Bibi case (as it came to be known) gave further legal validation to the Aga Khan's authority and reaffirmed the Ismaili identity of the Khojas.[56] Once again, a group of dissenters seceded, this time forming the Khoja Ithnaʿashari community. So that there would be no further doubt about his followers' Ismaili identity, Aga Khan III ordered them to desist from participating in some Shiʿi ceremonies such as mourning during Muharram, for they, unlike the Ithnaʿasharis, had a living Imam and had no cause to lament. As a result of these schisms and legal decisions, the identity of those Khojas who remained loyal to the Aga Khan was being clearly differentiated from that of the Sunnis and the Ithnaʿasharis alike, the cornerstone of which was allegiance to a living Ismaili Imam.[57]

The British courts played a crucial role in legally transforming the identity of the Khojas from being a caste of traders with indeterminate religious identity into a community of Muslims. Key to this transformation was the 1866 judgment of Justice Arnould. The court proceedings clearly indicate that the Justice and the Khoja witnesses could not effectively communicate and understand each other because of their radically different world-views. He could not make sense of their testimony since they could neither define precisely how they were Muslim nor present their definition of Islam in terms that he could understand. Indeed, court transcripts indicate that some of the statements made by the Khoja witnesses suggested that they had multivalent religious

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affiliations.[58] As a result, Justice Arnould decided that he could not rely on the evidence of the Khoja witnesses to resolve the issue of identity. Instead, he carefully sifted through the evidence he had gathered from witnesses, looking for elements that he could fit within the framework of categories 'Islam,' 'Muslim,' 'Hindu,' 'Sunni,' 'Shi'a' and 'Ismaili' deduced from the scholarship of Western historians of Islam. He regarded these experts as 'authorities' who had 'objective' knowledge of the subject and were, therefore, more reliable than the Khoja practitioners themselves.

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As a result of these legal categorizations and normative pressure from the courts, the Khojas found themselves being defined with reference to the sectarian categories of 'Shi'a' and 'Sunni' as understood normatively in the wider context of the Indian subcontinent. In this way, they began to see themselves increasingly in sectarian terms, that is, as Ismaili, Ithna'ashari or Sunni. Sectarian affiliation became a primary identity marker, superseding other markers such as caste, ethnicity, etc., a trend echoed in many other communities in colonial India. During the course of the 20th century, the Khojas who remained loyal to the Aga Khans began self-identifying as (Nizari) Ismailis. While the British courts may have been responsible for defining the Ismaili identity of the Khojas legally, the issue had yet to be resolved in terms of their doctrines and practices. For this process, as we shall see below, the Khojas had to rely on the various reform initiatives instituted by the Aga Khans.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith has remarked that Muslim societies generally place a greater emphasis on orthopraxy (conformity to ritual practice) than orthodoxy (conformity to doctrine) as the yardstick to determine 'correct' Islamic practice.[59] In many Muslim societies, the degree of conformity to traditional ritual practice has become the index by which the 'Islamic' character of groups like the Khojas is judged.[60] The multivalent nature of Khoja practices as well as the prevalence of 'Indian' or 'Hindu' elements in their literature figured prominently in the testimony presented during the various court cases against the Aga Khans. British judges made references to these practices and observances in making their determination of the religious identity and origins of the Khojas. Those practices and beliefs which did not make sense within the Western constructed categories of 'Islam,' 'Sunni,' 'Shi'a,' were classified as irrelevant, ignorant, superstitious or simply false.[61] It is these very practices that became a source of

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growing tension within Khoja communities themselves, being partly responsible for the schisms in which many prominent individuals opted to become Sunni or Twelver Shi'i.

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As for the Khojas who opted to identify themselves as Ismaili, their beliefs and practices continued to provoke questions regarding their identity as Muslims.

Ismaili Khojas in post-colonial spaces

Such questions became particularly pressing in the aftermath of the partition of South Asia in 1947 and the creation of Pakistan. Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah, the popularly acclaimed founder of Pakistan, was by birth a Khoja and educated as a lawyer in England. In pressing for a separate nation for the subcontinent's Muslims, he had in mind a polity that provided Muslims a safe haven in which to practise their religion and nurture their cultural traditions. More specifically, he envisaged a Western-style liberal democracy in which the Muslim majority and non-Muslim minorities would be free to practise their religions without interference from the state. Soon after its founding, however, there were attempts to transform Pakistan into an 'Islamic' state rather than simply a Muslim homeland. The push towards a more 'Islamic' character came from Sunni religious scholars (*ulama*) who had initially opposed Jinnah's vision of Pakistan and, indeed, had termed him the 'great infidel'. Along with Mawlana Mawdudi (d. 1947), the founder of the Jama'at-i Islami, they now felt that Islam, rather than any Western secular ideologies, should underpin the newly founded state of Pakistan. In their view, this would ensure that Islamic ideals of economic and social justice would prevail in society. Eventually, to counter powerful forces of ethno-nationalism that threatened its integrity, the Pakistani state itself began to appeal to Islam as a binding ideological force which could hold together a nation composed of different ethnic groups.

Some regimes, notably that of Zia ul-Haqq (1978 – 1988), introduced 'Islamization' policies with a view to enforcing upon Pakistan's Muslim citizenry religious and cultural practices which were deemed to be 'Islamically' correct. Such programmes proved to be inimical to the fabric of Pakistani society since they accentuated religious and sectarian differences. The identification of Islam as the state religion negatively influenced the status of non-Muslims, particularly Christians and Hindus, who were effectively rendered second class citizens, at least as far as the right-

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wing religious political parties were concerned. Furthermore, by privileging the Sunni interpretation of Islam (specifically that of the Jama'at-i Islami), the state in effect marginalized alternative interpretations of the faith. Policies of Islamization thus resulted in heightened sectarian tension, not only between Shi'a and Sunni, but even among Sunni communities themselves. This provoked furious debates on the determination of 'correct' Muslim identity. Groups such as the Ahmadiyya, who claim to be Muslim, were proclaimed non-Muslim by the state and subjected to religious persecution.[62] In an atmosphere of growing sectarian intolerance, the identity of Ismailis also came under increased scrutiny and their position precarious. On the one hand, the significant involvement of the institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network in improving the socio-economic, educational and health standards of both Ismaili and non-Ismaili populations in Pakistan has helped in fostering a great deal of goodwill towards the Ismailis in many different circles of Pakistani society. On the other hand, some right-wing Sunni groups such as the Jama'at-i Islami, Tablighi Jama'at and other Wahhabi-Salafi influenced groups have launched vigorous campaigns to propagate their version of 'true' Islam among the Ismailis. In Karachi, a city with a large Ismaili population, such groups have built Sunni *masjid*s adjacent to Ismaili *jama'at-khana*s in an attempt to entice Ismailis to join the Sunni fold.

In post-colonial India, the intensity with which the Ismaili Khojas have been questioned by other Muslims about their Islamic identity has been considerably less than in Pakistan. This is perhaps due to the general situation of Muslims in India as vulnerable minorities who have collectively suffered considerable discrimination, notwithstanding the avowedly secular and pluralistic ideals on which the Indian nation was founded. Ironically, the Indic flavour of some Ismaili Khoja religious practices and social customs, constituting a liability in the context of Pakistan, has resonated well with the majority Hindu population. Many Hindus have come to regard Ismaili Khojas as model Muslims since they appear to have better assimilated to Indian culture in contrast to those Muslims who articulate their identity using non-Indic, Arabo-Persian symbolism. Yet, identification even as assimilated Muslims in contemporary India is not without its problems. Occasionally, during communal riots, the Ismailis, too, have suffered the fate of other Muslim communities falling victim to attacks by right wing Hindu mobs. For

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instance, during the riots in Mumbai in the aftermath of the destruction of Babri mosque in December 1992, the Muslim victims numbered many Ismailis. The genocide of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, in which both the Hindu nationalist-dominated state government and police were deemed to be complicit, also impacted the state's Ismaili population, a small proportion of whom chose to emigrate from Gujarat. Thus in India, too, the Ismailis have sometimes paid a heavy price for closer and explicit identification with other Muslims.

The Rearticulation of Khoja Identity

The history of the Ismaili Khojas in the 20th century is best characterized as a series of responses to the ever-changing political, social and cultural landscapes of colonial and post-colonial South Asia, which we have discussed above. Within this highly volatile milieu, Khoja understandings of themselves and their faith changed significantly. The plurality of religious frameworks which they had traditionally used to express their multivalent identity became increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of modernity and the polarizing forces of religious nationalism and communalism. Consequently, this plurality was progressively eroded until they came to define themselves in narrow sectarian terms deemed more appropriate to colonial and post-colonial tastes and sensibilities. Among those Khojas who opted to be Ismaili, the process of identity redefinition constituted part of a larger programme of social and religious reforms, initiated by Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, in the early 20th century. The impetus underpinning the Aga Khan's reforms stemmed from the need to respond to the growing impact of modernization, socio-economic transformation and nationalism on his followers, as well as the need to clearly define their identity as Shi'a Ismailis within the larger Muslim *umma* (community). To facilitate the reforms, Aga Khan III established several new institutions that were better suited to governing and responding to the needs of his followers within the dynamic socio-political milieu of colonial India. In tandem with these efforts, there was a progressive rearticulation of Ismaili Khoja interpretation and practice of their faith within a framework of Islamic and specifically Shi'i traditions. Following his death in 1957, his programme of reforms was considerably intensified and

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accelerated by his grandson, Prince Karim, Aga Khan IV, and extended to other Ismaili communities across the world.

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Reorienting understanding and practice of faith

To execute their ambitious programme of reforms, the Aga Khans used two important instruments: constitutions and *farman*s (directives). In 1905, Aga Khan III introduced the first of series of constitutions in which the Ismailis were formally and legally defined in modern terms as a 'religious community' of which he was the head. This marked the initiation of a period during which he created new structures of national and provincial councils through which he implemented change in a variety of areas including governance, social welfare, health and education. As they evolved in the post-colonial era, these institutions became the primary agencies to implement social and economic change change among the Ismailis in India, Pakistan and the newly independent countries of East Africa. In the later decades of the 20th century, under the leadership of the Aga Khan IV, they had evolved into an international network that 'both expresses and expedites the modernization of the sect while it also emphasizes and reinforces the singular role of the Imam'.[63] In addition to outlining the roles, responsibilities and regulations governing these institutions, the constitutions contained lengthy sections governing social customs, as well as personal and family law with detailed regulations on marriage and divorce. Over the course of the 20th century, these constitutions were revised several times to keep pace with the changes in contexts and circumstances (as discussed elsewhere in this volume).

The Aga Khans also issued *farman*s through which they conveyed to their followers counsel and direction on a wide-range of issues, both religious and secular. In the eyes of their followers, the *farman*s embodied the ongoing and infallible guidance of the Imams, hence obedience to them was obligatory. Not surprisingly, *farman*s became the most significant means through which the Aga Khans mandated reform in all aspects of the Ismaili community, including the status of women.[64] In the early 20th century, with the rapid spread of print culture in South Asia, *farman*s were compiled into books so that they could be widely accessible to Ismaili Khojas. In most of these early publications, *farman*s were recorded in Indic vernaculars – Hindustani, Gujarati and Sindhi – while in

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later years English became more prominent, though translations into local languages were also made available. As the corpus of printed *farman*s grew over time, it developed into a bona fide genre of Ismaili religious literature, representing the word of the Imams. Readings of selected *farman*s became an important feature of Ismaili worship, indicative of their status as the principal source for contemporary normative understanding of the faith.

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The programme of reforms instituted by the Aga Khans dramatically transformed Ismaili Khoja social, economic and religious life. In the area of religious life and practice, it appears to have had two intersecting objectives: first, to promote among the Khojas a better understanding of Ismaili concepts and practices using frameworks consistent with the Shi'i and general Islamic traditions; and second, to articulate an interpretation of Islam that was relevant to the emerging contexts of colonial and post-colonial South Asia.[65] The expression and application of these objectives among the Khojas was by their very nature a complex process involving changes in many dimensions. At the fundamental level it involved shifting the understanding of key doctrines away from local Indic frameworks (increasingly viewed to be Hinduistic) to ones that would be considered authentically Islamic. This meant that the Ismaili doctrine of imamate, instead of being understood within a frame of reference that was in parts ahistorical or mythological and intermingled with idioms from the Vaishnavite, Sant or Bhakti traditions, was now formulated within a broader framework of Islamic history, theology and mysticism, as well as Shi'i paradigms of religious authority.

A key component of religious reform under Aga Khan III was familiarizing the Ismaili Khojas with new ways of conceptualizing their religion through various means, including the production of printed material (books, periodicals, pamphlets) in several vernacular languages, particularly Gujarati. It also involved the establishment of a network of schools to impart religious education to children with a curriculum that would reflect the new frameworks of understanding. Founded as early as 1903, these schools were initially called 'Sindhi' because the students were taught Khojki or Khwajah Sindhi, the special script of the Khojas in which religious material was recorded.[66] Interestingly, the formulation of an explicitly Ismaili Muslim identity also resulted in changes in nomenclature. Traditionally, Khoja names had been indistinguishable from

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those of their Lohana and Bhatia compatriots. Since these names were increasingly considered to be indicative of a 'Hindu' identity in the socio-political climate of 20th-century South Asia, they were gradually replaced by Arabic or Persian ones that resonated better with Muslim identity. As a result, while many Ismaili Khojas retained ancestral names now considered to be 'Hindu' (such as Nanji, Ramji, Dewji etc.), Arabo-Persian names became increasingly common for generations born from the early 20th century onwards. In some instances, especially for families who experienced great societal pressure to conform to Islamic norms, even ancestral names were changed.[67]

After the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and the rise of movements seeking to define Pakistan as an 'Islamic state', the trend towards 'Islamization' gained momentum. There were significant efforts at adjusting those aspects of religious practice that were deemed to be inconsistent with norms defined by Muslim majority communities.[68] There was a rapid removal or reformulation of rituals, including those connected with birth, marriage and death to render them more Islamic in character. The most important of the changes, however, was in regard to the daily prayer that the Ismaili Khojas recited thrice a day. Khoja tradition attributed the composition of this prayer, simply called *du'a,* to their founding *pir*, Sadr al-Din. The prayer was by and large in the Indic vernaculars, Sindhi and Gujarati, with a number of phrases in Arabic. Among its contents were invocations for the intercession of the Imam who was depicted both as *pir/murshid* as well as *Naklanki* or *Nishkalank*i, the 'immaculate one,' the Satpanthi name for the tenth *avatara* of Vishnu in his form as the Shi'i Imam 'Ali. Through the *avatara-imam* equation, the prayer created an unbroken chain of religious authorities linking the ten *avatara*s of Vishnu with the Ismaili Imams from 'Ali to Aga Khan III. In the 1950s this *du'a*, which had been modified several times during its history, was replaced by one entirely in Arabic.

The new prayer comprises of six parts, each of which begins with one or more Qur'anic verses,[69] some of which are used as proof texts for the doctrine of the imamate. Each part also contains intercessory prayers addressed to the Imams and concludes in a prostration (*sujud*) affirming obedience and submission to Allah. The introduction of the new prayer was significant for three reasons: first, the use of Arabic instead of an Indic vernacular aligned the prayer with a universal language of Islamic liturgical practice;

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secondly, it reflected a shift in the Khoja understanding of the doctrine of the imamate from a Vaisnavite coloured framework to one based on Qur'anic proof texts; thirdly, the new prayer maintains a distinctively Ismaili character by adopting a form that is different from the traditional Sunni or Shi'i *salat*. The fact that the new prayer was to be universally recited by Nizari Ismailis the world over and not unique to the Khojas indicates a psychological shift in orientation, not only from 'Khoja' to 'Ismaili' but also from local to universal. It indicates that the reform of Khoja practice was not merely in response to changing conditions in South Asia but, more importantly, an occasion to create a pan-Ismaili identity by developing a set of ritual practices that would be common to Ismailis wherever they lived and whatever their local cultural practices. This is a point we shall discuss in the conclusion.

Impact on devotional life and literature

How did this reorientation of various Khoja customs and practices bear upon their devotional life and literature? As noted earlier, the principal devotional literature of the Satpanth tradition were the *ginans* believed to have been composed by a series of pirs and sayyids who for centuries served as intermediaries between the Ismaili Imams in Iran and their Khoja followers in India.[70] Composed in several Indic languages and sung in various *raga*s, the *ginan*s had been the focus of intense veneration as the embodiment of truth and wisdom. The recitation of *ginan*s, alongside performance of ritual prayers, was one of the mainstays of Satpanthi worship. Memorization of *ginan* texts formed an important element in the transmission of Satpanthi teachings from one generation to the next. Beyond their role in worship, the *ginan*s permeated many aspects of communal and individual life.[71] Notwithstanding their special significance for the Khojas, the *ginan*s were by no means the only genre of devotional literature in Khoja religious life. In the 18th- and 19th-century manuscripts belonging to Khoja communities reveal that, in addition to the *ginan*s, devotional literatures from a variety of non-Satpanthi traditions also played a significant role in Khoja devotional life. For example, we find in these manuscripts, juxtaposed to the *ginan*s, a diverse collection of texts: poems attributed to famous Sufi, Sant and Bhakti poets; *marsiya*, the traditional Shi'i elegies commemorating the martyrdom of the Shi'i Imam Husayn in Sindhi, Hindustani or Gujarati; religious

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narratives to be read during Muharram assemblies traditionally held by Shi'i communities; poems of devotion to the Prophet Muhammad and his family; *fal-nama,* or prognostication charts, attributed either to a Shi'i Imam or a *pir*, as well as various amulets, magical squares and formulae to be used for exorcism and talismanic purposes.[72] The presence of such a broad spectrum of devotional literatures among pre-colonial Khoja communities is hardly surprisingly given the multivalent nature of their religious practice. Furthermore, Michel Boivin suggests that by including such material in their manuscripts, the Khojas were adhering to the standard episteme for *pothi*s, prayer books, widely prevalent among different religious communities in Sind.[73]

With the reorientation of Khoja religious identity in the early part of the 20th century, much of such non-*ginan*ic literature found in the manuscript tradition fell into oblivion; it had effectively lost its significance and relevance in the newly emerging formulations of faith. The *ginan*s, on the other hand, because they were quintessential to Khoja identity, continued to retain their importance, albeit in new ways. As a result of the reforms, their character, contents and functions changed significantly so that they could be accommodated within the new orientations of the Ismaili Khoja community. Most noteworthy, in this regard, was the creation of an official canon of authorised texts of *ginan*s. The process of collecting and collating the texts was by no means an easy task since manuscripts were scattered far and wide, and there seems to have been no attempt to create a consolidated record. This is perhaps an indication that for pre-colonial Khojas, the *ginan*s may not have been initially conceived of as a scriptural corpus exclusively identified with one religious community as they came to be regarded later with the emergence of the printed canon. In fact, as a result of the different orientation in which their identities developed in the 20th century, other Satpanthi groups such as the Imamshahis, with whom the Ismaili Khojas have historically shared the *ginan*s, have also come to consider them as part of their 'Hindu' heritage.[74] These contradictory characterizations of the *ginan*s are another indication that they represent a genre that is 'portable' across modern constructed religious boundaries. The explanation is also significant since it is underpinned by a perspective that is now almost universally associated with the *ginan*s, namely, that they were intended primarily as a literature of conversion, composed to 'convert' Hindus to the Ismaili interpretation of Islam. As

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Amrita Shodhan points out, this is a perspective that was first publicly articulated in the Aga Khan Case of 1866 and became definitive in the subsequent characterization of ginanic literature.[75] Recent scholarship has raised a host of questions regarding the term 'conversion:' its implication for our understanding of the processes of religious change; its use as a political tool by the colonial and post-colonial state; its inadequacy to explain the spread of Islamic ideas across the subcontinent; as well as the role that literary genres such as the *ginan*s or Sufi folk poetry may have played in the process.[76]

Community traditions assert that Aga Khan II and III, in an attempt to produce a 'standardized' corpus of *ginan*s, entrusted the responsibility for collecting manuscripts to Lalji Devraj and his associates. On the basis of manuscripts they had collected, Lalji Devraj and his team recorded approximately 700 texts which they edited in varying degrees.[77] They eventually published them through the Khoja Press in Bombay. Founded in 1903 by Lalji Devraj, the press, later known as the Ismaili Printing Press (reflecting the shift in identity from Khoja to Ismaili) became the official publishing house for Ismaili Khoja literature. It used fonts specially manufactured in Germany for printing Khojki. In 1922, the publication of *ginan*s was transferred to the Recreation Club Institute, founded by Aga Khan III in 1919, to oversee publication of religious material as well as to engage into research into Ismailism. To prevent the circulation of non-official versions of *ginan* texts, private publication was discouraged; the Ghulam-i Husayn Chapkhanu, a private press which used to print lithographs of *ginan*s stopped doing so in the early 20th century. Since Lalji Devraj's publication activities were believed to have had the imprimatur of the Aga Khans, many Ismaili Khojas considered his editions to be bona fide and authoritative texts of *ginan*ic literature. His *Tapsil buk*, a catalogue of some 700 *ginan*s published in 1915, has been regarded as the official list of the early printed *ginan* texts.[78] In the 1970s, when changes in the Ismaili Khoja communities necessitated further revisions in the texts of the *ginan*s, the Lalji Devraj editions were used as the basis of the new revised versions.[79] The emergence of the Lalji Devraj editions as the authoritative canon was greatly facilitated by the fact that his team is said to have buried nearly 3500 manuscripts which they had used as bases for their editions.[80] This move limited the possibility for the emergence of competing versions of the *ginan* texts. More significant, however, is the fact that the Lalji Devraj editions excluded perhaps as many as 300 *ginan*

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texts from the 'official' corpus since their contents were deemed to be inappropriate for the direction in which the Ismaili Khoja identity was evolving.

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The creation of a 'standardised' corpus of *ginan*s is significant because it also effectively amounted to a closure of a centuries-old tradition of *ginan* compositions, the last official exponent of this genre being a woman, Sayyida Imam Begum, who died in Karachi in 1866.[81] It also terminated the era of *pir*s and *sayyid*s, and by so doing contributed to further consolidation of the Aga Khans' spiritual authority among the Khojas. Although their Ismaili Khoja followers continued to recite the *ginan*s, their importance as sources of normative understanding of Khoja faith and practice gradually diminished. This all-important function came to be increasingly performed by the *farman*s issued periodically by the Aga Khans. Since the *farman*s embodied the authoritative contemporary, ongoing guidance of the living Imams, they soon eclipsed the *ginan*s. As the tradition of *farman*s came to be consolidated and readily available in print, its significance grew over the course of the 20th century. This development was to have significant impact on the contextual and relational functions of the *ginan*s, altering the ways in which the communities of believers interpreted and related to them. For example, *ginan*s came to be increasingly seen as commentaries on the inner meanings of the Quran. There was a notable shift in the type of *ginan*s that were recited. Those *ginan*s that were considered to be explicitly 'Hinduistic' in their mode of theological expression were abandoned or no longer recited. A noteworthy example of this is the *Das Avatara*, one of the classic *ginan*s of Satpanth literature that was mentioned earlier; its recitation had completely ceased by the late 1950s and in subsequent decades it disappeared from general consciousness of the community. In late 1970s, other compositions that explained Ismaili doctrine predominantly within an Indic framework were also dropped from active use. Similarly, individual terms in *ginan*s that could be interpreted as 'Hinduistic' were changed and replaced by those seen to have a greater Islamic resonance. In effect, this meant that words of Indic origin were replaced with Arabo-Persian ones. For example, 'Hari' was replaced by 'Ali;' '*swami*' by '*maula*' 'Gur Brahma' by 'Nabi Muhammad' and so on.[82] However, the definition of what constituted a 'Hindu' element as opposed to an 'Islamic' one became a major issue of contention among certain members of the community, who argued that terms from Indic languages with no specific theological

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connection to the Hindu tradition were replaced by Arabo-Persian ones.[83] By the end of the 20th century, when the Ismaili Khojas came into greater contact with Ismaili communities in other parts of the world, many with distinctive cultural traditions of their own, the perspective in which they understood *ginan*s changed even further. The Ismaili Khojas, who had hitherto conflated the Ismaili tradition almost exclusively with the *ginan*s, came to realize that they were only one part of the global literary traditions of Ismaili devotional literatures that included genres in Arabic and Persian such as the *qasida*, *madoh* and *manqabat.*

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Towards a new historiography

The abandonment of traditional Satpanthi frameworks created the need for new literature through which the Ismaili Khojas could develop broader and more universal understandings of Ismaili doctrine. To meet this need, the Recreation Club, which Aga Khan III established in 1919 to engage in research and publication on Ismaili history, commissioned the first comprehensive history of the Ismaili Imamate in Gujarati, the most widely spoken language among the Khojas. The task of writing this monumental history, documenting the reigns of 48 Ismaili Imams from the seventh to the 20th century, was assigned to ʿAli Muhammad Jan Muhammad Chunara (1881-1966) who had served for a short period of time as the social secretary to Aga Khan III. In addition to being a factory owner in Bombay, Chunara was a pioneering journalist and editor of *The Ismaili*, the Anglo-Gujarati weekly for the Ismaili Khoja community published from Bombay. Already in 1918, at the behest of the Ismaili Sahitya Utjek Mandal (The Ismaili Literary Society), he had written a brief history of the Fatimids in Gujarati. With the assistance of Husein Shariff Bharmal, Hasan ʿAli Rahim Nathani and other staff members of the *The Ismaili* who were knowledgeable in various languages including Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English, Chunara spent eight years researching sources.[84] Finally, in 1936, the year commemorating Aga Khan III's Golden Jubilee, or 50 years as Imam, he published a 180 page work. Significantly, his Gujarati history of the Ismaili imamate had an Arabic title, *Nuram [Nuran] Mubin*, 'Manifest Light,' a Qur'anic expression (4:174) that is interpreted by Ismailis as a reference to the 'Light of Imamate' manifest in the world as a divinely ordained means of guidance for humanity. The work's Gujarati subtitle, *Allahni*

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Pavitra Rasi, 'God's Sacred Rope,' echoes another Qur'anic phase, *hablullah*, 'God's Rope,' (3:103) which is commonly interpreted in Shi'i sources as a reference to the institution of imamate. The use of these two phrases in the title, thus, underscores the increasingly Qur'anic bases for newly emerging Ismaili Khoja understandings of the imamate.

In his preface, 'Ali Muhammad Chunara commented that among his motivations for writing this book was the widespread ignorance among Khojas about their faith, as a result of which they fell prey to misinformation and propaganda spread by unscrupulous individuals who were intent on luring them away from the Ismaili community. He expressed the hope that, armed with the knowledge acquired from the *Nuram Mubin,* Ismaili Khojas would be able 'to stand on their two feet'.[85] These remarks clarify a broader objective for the publication of his book; it was a means through which Ismaili Khojas could acquire sufficient knowledge with which to articulate and defend their faith. In this regard, the *Nuram Mubin* constituted a significant work within a larger corpus of literature written in Sindhi, Gujarati and Urdu, which was used as a response to a barrage of polemical attacks from groups opposed to the Aga Khan and the Ismailis. This anti-Ismaili polemic, particularly powerful in the first half of the 20th century, was intended to 'convert' Ismaili Khojas to either Sunni or Ithna'ashari Islam, or to Hinduism. In this battle for the hearts and minds of the Khojas, Chunara was a leading member of a group of articulate Ismaili loyalists with strong literary skills. Through a range of Gujarati publications that included newspaper articles, pamphlets and small booklets responding to Ithna'ashari Shi'i and Arya Samaj attacks, textbooks on Ismaili history and religion, and even volumes of poetry, this group of Ismaili revivalists, as Zawahir Moir calls them, 'sought to create a renewed sense of Ismaili identity, strong enough to hearten and educate their supporters and refute their opponents'.[86] Many of these publications generously cited references from the Qur'an and the *hadith*, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, reflecting the more Islamically based nature of their arguments. Similar works defending the Aga Khan and Ismaili doctrines were also written by prominent Ismaili Khojas in Sindhi during the same period. Some of these treatises attempt to show

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Ismailism, in particular the *ginan*s, as expressions of the powerful currents of Sufism that form the bedrock of Sindhi culture.[87]

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Since Aga Khan III recommended that his followers read the *Nuram Mubin* in order to learn the history of the Imams, the work was regarded as authoritative and sold briskly, necessitating several reprints. It was also translated into Urdu. [88]In the last decades of the 20th century, further publication of the *Nuram Mubin* ceased and the book was withdrawn from circulation. Although there were no official explanations for this development, we can speculate that there may have been two principal reasons. First, as discussed above, the book was initially written in the early decades of the 20th century in a context of virulent polemic attacks on the Ismaili faith and the legitimacy of the Aga Khans. As such the work, written in part to counter these attacks, adopted a perspective that was becoming rapidly outdated in the new circumstances in which Ismaili Khojas were living. Second, the book was highly hagiographic in nature, replete with miracles associated with the Imams and *pirs*. Some of these accounts were drawn directly from allegories in the *ginan*s which had been interpreted rather literally. As these accounts attracted criticism about their factuality, a more historical perspective was adopted, as reflected in newer histories such as Sherali ʿAlidina's *Ta'rikh Imamat*, (1952), a history of the Imamate in the Sindhi language, and the *Ta'rikh a'imma Ismaʿiliyya* (1978-1983), a four volume work in Urdu. Both works avoid mythological and hagiographic discourses in their presentation of history and were published by the Ismaili Association for Pakistan, the official community institution authorized by the Imam to publish such material. In the 1990s, these locally produced histories were superseded by works of modern historical scholarship published under the auspices of The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London – a reflection of the transnational direction in which Aga Khan IV was guiding Ismaili communities.

Conclusion: Transnationalizing Ismaili Khoja Identity[89]

Thus far, this essay has explored the experiences of the Ismaili Khojas as they rearticulated their identity in response to changes in the cultural and political milieu in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial South Asia. The Aga Khans, as we have seen, inspired and determined the direction of identity formation within this regional context.

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During the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a result of economic and political pressures, some Khojas left South Asia to settle in other parts of the world, notably East Africa, UK and North America. Though these diasporic Khoja communities faced a range of issues different from the South Asian context, they continued to rely on the guidance of the Aga Khans to help them adapt to these new environments. Through various institutions, the Aga Khans modernized the structure and ethos of the Ismaili Khoja communities, whether in South Asia or abroad, formulating and reformulating doctrines, religious practices and devotional literatures so that they would be aligned with universally accepted idioms of the Islamic tradition, while at the same time reinforcing the core Shi'a Ismaili principles of the faith. Commenting on these efforts, Aly Kassam-Remtulla observes that, in addition to asserting the legitimacy of Ismailism within Islam, they were, in fact, important steps in forging a pan-Ismaili identity.[90]

We have already remarked on the pan-Ismaili dimension of some of these reforms. For instance, in the 1950s, an Arabic *du'a,* or daily prayer, presenting the doctrine of the Imamate within a framework based on Qur'anic verses, replaced a version which used Indic vernaculars (Gujarati and Sindhi) and drew heavily on the traditional Satpanthi formulations of doctrine. Since this Arabic prayer was introduced among non-Khoja Ismailis as well, it became a ritual commonly shared by Ismaili communities worldwide. We have also remarked how as a result of the reforms, the *farman*s, the directives by which the Aga Khans have guided their followers, eclipsed the *ginan*s as a source of normative doctrine and practice. As *farman*s have become readily accessible through the medium of print, they have become the primary source of religious guidance shared universally by Ismailis. Translations of *farman*s, which are on most occasions given in English, are also available in other important languages spoken by Ismailis today – Arabic, Persian, Tajik, Urdu, Gujarati, Sindhi and French. A *farman,* which the Aga Khan makes in Dushanbe, Tajikistan may be read in a *jama'at-khana* in Karachi, Mombasa, Toronto or Boston. In the last decades, the Ismaili Khojas have come into closer contact with other Ismaili communities worldwide. As a result, they increasingly think of themselves in pan-Ismaili terms.

Historically, the Aga Khans have played a key role in transnationalizing Ismaili Khoja identity in many different ways, such as encouraging migration to different parts of

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the world when necessary;[91] the evocation of the notion of a worldwide Ismaili 'fraternity', a belief that Ismailis are all brothers and sisters with the Aga Khan as their spiritual father; and the ethic of humanitarian service, that is, the obligation of Ismailis to help others, regardless of their race, nationality or religious persuasion, and that this kind of volunteerism amounts to service to the Imam.[92] More recent efforts in the direction of globalization have included the introduction of *Ta'lim*, a religious and cultural education curriculum designed by The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London for the education of all young Ismailis internationally. Available in several different languages, its curriculum is both pan-Ismaili and pan-Islamic in character.

In the last decade of the 20th century and the first few years of the twenty-first century, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, through the institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network, has played a key role in facilitating all kinds of exchanges between Ismailis living in different regions of the world. Such exchanges became even more pronounced, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the establishment of contact with Ismaili communities residing in various Central Asian Republics, especially Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as well as Syria and Iran. As a result of these contacts, the Ismaili Khojas have not only become less 'Khoja-centric' in their understandings of Ismaili Islam but are also becoming more familiar with Ismaili traditions of devotional literatures other than *ginan*s. As a result of institutional encouragement, it is now increasingly common to hear Ismaili Khojas reciting Persian or Arabic *qasida*s in their *jama'at-khana*s. On the other hand, non-Khoja Ismaili communities are being reshaped by contact with some Khoja customs and practices. Most notable in this regard is the globalization of the offices of the *mukhi* and *kamadia*, a quintessentially Khoja institution representing the authority of the Imam in the *jama'at-khana*. These cross-cultural encounters have created a need for the formulation of an Ismaili identity that not only recognizes, respects and preserves regional or local differences in culture and tradition but also creates certain universal commonalities in practice and doctrine. The role of the Aga Khan IV in negotiating the delicate balance between tradition and modernity, diversity and uniformity, has thus become pivotal.

The increasingly international and cosmopolitan nature of the Ismaili community was given legal recognition in the form of a new constitution which Aga Khan IV

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ordained on 13 December 1986, his fiftieth birthday. This constitution was to be in effect for all Ismaili communities world-wide, superseding numerous local or regional ones. It expresses Ismaili identity in pan-Islamic and pan-Ismaili terms. Its preamble defines Ismaili doctrines within a universal Islamic framework: the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, as they are formally identified, who affirm the *shahada* (profession of faith), a universal marker of Muslim identity, as well as key Islamic concepts such as *tawhid* (monotheism) and prophecy, including the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad.[93] They acknowledge the pan-Shi'a doctrine of imamate, specifically Imam 'Ali's authority to interpret and expound on God's final message, the Qur'an, after the Prophet's death and the continuation of the imamate by heredity through his direct descendants. Underlining the longstanding connection of Ismaili thought with traditions of Islamic mysticism and esotericism, the Ismailis are characterized as *murid*s belonging to a *tariqah*; they are linked to the Imam by a *bay'a,* or oath of allegiance; the essential function of the Imam being to illuminate 'the *murid'*s path to spiritual enlightenment and vision'.[94]

Additionally, the new constitution emphasizes the transnational identity of the Ismailis through their allegiance to the Imam, as being united with each other and as part of a global brotherhood. It also identifies several international institutions, such as the Leaders International Forum, a consultative body consisting of Ismaili leaders from various parts of the world who advise the Imam,[95] and others that form part of Aga Khan Development Network, established to 'realize the social conscience of Islam' by promoting the social welfare of societies globally.[96] Thus, the 1986 constitution marks a significant milestone in Ismaili history, symbolizing the transnationalization process, that is, the emergence of the Ismailis from their local and culturally specific formulations of faith into a global Muslim community sharing a distinctive identity and interpretation of the Islamic faith.

This essay has attempted to show the ways in which the Ismaili Khojas of South Asia have transformed their identity over the last 150 years. A once tightly knit and closed caste-like community that drew comfortably on a multiplicity of heritages in the early 19th century found its multivalent identity a liability when it encountered modernity and the nation state. The modern urge to categorize and divide based on difference, reflected in the ethos of the colonial and post-colonial nation state, fractured this

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multivalent identity, splintering the Khojas into various sectarian groups – Muslim and non-Muslim. For those who expressed their loyalty to the Aga Khans, this meant a shift in their identity from being members of a Satpanthi Khoja caste in western India to *murid*s (disciples) belonging to a *tariqah* of Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims living in over 25 countries around the world. While it took an institution of British colonial India to define in legal terms Khoja identity as being Ismaili, it took an Islamic institution, the hereditary Ismaili imamate, to navigate the Ismaili Khojas through the whirlpools of cultural and political change in colonial and post-colonial South Asia. In the process, their fluid and multivalent pre-colonial identity was stripped of its traditional Indic plurality and transformed into a modern denominational one. Yet, through their Imams, the Ismaili Khojas entered a new world where they encountered a different kind of plurality – the geographical and cultural diversity of Ismaili communities worldwide. The charismatic authority of the Aga Khans and their vision were crucial to the implementation of monumental changes that impacted not only religious doctrine and practice, but also socioeconomic life.[97] While the Ismaili Khojas accepted many of these changes, it was not at the expense of the cornerstone of their essentially Shi'i identity founded upon belief in a living Imam who can give rulings with complete authority. It is this belief that gives them and their fellow Ismailis the world over a unique identity among Muslims today.

Notes

***** This essay incorporates and builds upon material from a previous article on this subject by the author, 'The Khojas of South Asia: Defining a Space of their Own', *Cultural Dynamic*s, 13 (2001), pp. 155-168. The author wishes to thank Michael Currier and Shiraz Hajiani for their comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

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[3] Aga Khan III, *The Memoirs of Aga Khan: World Enough and Time* (New York, 1954), p. 24.

[4] Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 2-3.

[5] 'Ata-Malik Juwayni, *Ta'rikh-i jahangushay*, tr. J.A. Boyle as*The History of the World-Conqueror* (Cambridge, MA 1958), vol. 2, p. 723.

[6] Paul E. Walker, 'Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani and the Development of Ismaili Neoplatonism' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1974), p. 8.

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[7] Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar, NY, 1978), p. 132.

[8] J. Kraemer, *Maimonides. The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds* (New York, 2008), p. 158.

[9] W. Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliographical Survey* (Tehran, 1963), p. 11.

[10] For a contextual approach to understanding Satpanth and the Nizari Ismaili tradition, see Ali Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London, 2002), pp. 1-24.

[11] Faisal Devji, 'Conversion to Islam: The Khojas' (unpublished paper, University of Chicago, 1987), p. 49.

[12] According to Nizari Ismaili belief, the Aga Khans hold authority as Imams by virtue of being descendants of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima and son-in-law ʿAli ibn Abi Talib. Aga Khan III and Aga Khan IV are acknowledged as, respectively, the 48th and 49th Imam in direct descent from the Prophet.

[13] Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition*, pp. 72-77.

[14] Wladimir Ivanow, 'Khodja', in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam,* ed. H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers (Leiden, 1953), p. 256. Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali questions this commonly accepted derivation of the title Khoja but does not offer a reasonable alternative. He also claims that it was first used by Pir Satgur (ca. 11th century); see his 'Meaning of Khoja', in *Encyclopaedia of Ismailism* (Karachi, 2006), p. 359.

[15] J. C. Masselos, 'The Khojas of Bombay: The Defining of Formal Membership Criteria during the Nineteenth Century', in I. Ahmad, ed., *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims* (Delhi, 1973), pp. 1-20; and Hatim Amiji, 'Some Notes on Religious Dissent in Nineteenth-Century East Africa', *African Historical Studies*, 4 (1971), pp. 603-616.

[16] *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay, 1877-1914), vol. 9, part 2, p. 39.

[17] Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, p. 101.

[18] Hamid Ali, 'The Customary and Statutory Law of the Muslims in India', *Islamic Culture*, 11 (1937), p. 355.

[19] S.T. Lokhandwalla, 'Islamic Law and Ismaili Communities (Khojas and Bohras)', in S. T Lokhandwalla, ed., *India and Contemporary Islam* (Simla, 1971), pp. 385-386.

[20] On the tradition of *ginan*s generally, see Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*; Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans* (London, 1992); and Tazim Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* (Albany, NY, 1997).

[21] W. Ivanow, *Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism* (Leiden, 1952), p. 29.

[22] For a more detailed summary of doctrines in the *ginan*s, see Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, pp. 20-24.

[23] Ali Asani, *The Bujh Niranjan: An Ismaili Mystical Poem* (Cambridge, MA, 1991). Michel Boivin suggests that *ginan*s (such as the *Bujh Niranjan*) which employ a highly Persianized vocabulary may be more recent compositions, dating to the 18th and 19th centuries when there was a 'renaissance' in the *ginan* tradition associated with the 'Iranization' of Satpanth; see his 'New Problems Related to the History and to

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the Tradition of the Agakhani Khojahs in Karachi and Sindh', *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, 46 (1998), pp. 12-14.

[24] Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment,* pp. 54-70.

[25] Mujtaba Ali, *The Origins of the Khojahs and their Religious Life Today* (Bonn, 1936), pp. 63-67.

[26] Masselos, 'The Khojas of Bombay', p. 7.

[27] J. Arnould, *Judgement of the Honourable Sir Joseph Arnould in the Khojah Case otherwise known as the Aga Khan Case* (Bombay, 1867), p. 15; J. N. Hollister, *The Shi'a of India* (London, 1953), pp. 390-392.

[28] Reginald E. Enthoven, 'Khojahs', in his *TheTribes and Castes of Bombay* (Bombay, 1920-1922), vol. 2, pp. 229-230.

[29] Ali, *The Origins of the Khojah*s, p. 68; Hollister, *The Shi'a*, p. 389; *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, 9 (1899), pp. 48-49.

[30] Shackle and Moir*, Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, p. 24.

[31] Ivanow, *Brief Survey of the Evolution of Ismailism*, p. 20.

[32] Tony K. Stewart, 'In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving of the Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory*', History of Religions*, 40 (2001), pp. 260-287.

[33] Amrita Shodhan, 'Legal Representation of the Khojas and the Pushtimarga Vaishnava Polities and Communities: The Aga Khan Case and the Maharaj Libel Case in Mid-Nineteenth Century Bombay' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1995), p. 42.

[34] Census Commissioner for India, *Census of India 1901* (Bombay, 1901), vol. 18: *Baroda*, part 1, p. 152, and *Census of India 1911* (Bombay, 1911), vol. 7: *Bombay*, part 1, p. 58.

[35] Ali, 'The Customary and Statutory Law of the Muslims in India', p. 355.

[36] As quoted in Amiji, 'Some Notes on Religious Dissent', p. 605.

[37] Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Delhi, 1964), p. 156.

[38] Ibid., p. 162.

[39] Ibid., p. 163.

[40] Reported in the *Bombay Telegraph and Courier*, 24 June 1947, as quoted in Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law* (Calcutta, 2001), p. 101.

[41] Peter Hardy, *Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 116.

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[44] Asani, 'The Khojahs of South Asia', p. 159.

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[50] Amrita Shodhan, 'The Entanglement of the Ginans in Khoja Governance', in T. Kassam and F. Mallison, ed., *Ginans: Texts and Contexts* (New Delhi, 2007), p. 171.

[51] Shodhan, *A Question of Community,* p. 12.

[52] Ibid., p. 86.

[53] Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, pp. 367-369.

[54] Arnould, *Judgement of the Honourable Sir Joseph Arnould in the Khojah Case,* p. 17.

[55] W.E. Hart, ed. *Report of Cases Decided in the High Court of Bombay* (Rajkot, 1907), p. 363.

[56] *Bombay Law Reporter* (Bombay, 1908), pp. 409-495.

[57] Esmail, 'Satpanth Ismailism', pp. 197, 253.

[58] Shodhan, *A Question of Community*, p. 101.

[59] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), p. 20.

[60] Hannah Papanek, 'Leadership and Social Change in the Khoja Ismailia Community' (Ph.D. thesis, Radcliffe College, Harvard University, 1962), p. 80.

[61] Shodhan, *A Question of Community*, p. 111.

[62] See Yohannan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous:Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, CA, 1989).

[63] Cynthia Salvadori, *Through Open Doors: A View of Asian Cultures in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1989), p. 232.

[64] Diamond Rattansi, 'Islamization and the Khojah Isma'ili Community in Pakistan', (Ph.D. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1987).

[65] See Michel Boivin, 'The Reform of Islam in Ismaili Shi'ism from 1885-to 1957', in F. 'Nalini' Delvoye, ed., *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian* Studies (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 197-216.

[66] For Khojki script, see Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, pp. 100-123.

[67] Rafiuddin Ahmed notes a similar tendency among Muslims in Bengal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.: 'The craze for a Muslim, as distinct from Bengali identity, had its impact even on personal names. Poorer Muslims in Bengal traditionally had local first names indistinguishable from those of Hindus. These, to the ashraf and the mullahs, were unsuitable for Muslims….the tendency was clearly in favour of

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Arabic and Persian names….new-born Muslim babies were given appropriate Perso-Arabic names in the proper Islamic fashion….and less-fortunate adults (were induced) to give up their Bengali names for "correct" Muslim ones'. See his *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906*, pp. 112-113.

[68] For this process in Pakistan, see Papanek, 'Leadership and Social Change in the Khoja Ismailia Community'.

[69] The Qur'anic verses used include Sura 4:59, Sura 36:12, Sura 5:67, Sura 48:10, Sura 8:27.

[70] On authorship and authority in the *ginan*s, see Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, pp. 82-99.

[71] For the role of the *ginan*s in Ismaili Khoja devotional life, see Ali S. Asani, 'The Ismaili Ginans as Devotional Literature', in R. S. McGregor, ed., *Devotional Literature in South Asia: Current Research, 1985-1988* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 101-112.

[72] Ali S. Asani, *The Harvard Collection of Ismaili Literature in Indic Languages: A Descriptive Catalog and Finding Aid* (Boston, 1992), pp. 6-22.

[73] Michel Boivin, 'Ginans and the Management of the Religious Heritage of the Ismaili Khojas in Sindh', in T. Kassam and F. Mallison, ed., *Ginans: Texts and Contexts* (New Delhi, 2007), pp. 42-44.

[74] See Khan, 'Rewriting the Ginans: Revolution and Resistance among the Imamshahis'.

[75] Shodhan, 'The Entanglement of the Ginans in Khoja Governance', p. 173.

[76] Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief* (New York, 1998); see also Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, pp. 13-20.

[77] The methods that Lalji Devraj and his team used to edit texts need careful study. In the case of at least one *ginan*, the *Bujh Niranjan*, I have shown that in his edition of the text, some material was introduced that was not found in the original manuscripts. See Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment*, pp. 91-92.

[78] Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, p.16.

[79] Ibid., p.17.

[80] Ibid., p.16.

[81] Amrita Shodhan suggests that Imam Begum was a controversial figure, especially among male members of the Khoja community who complained that their wives were so captivated by her that they neglected their household duties. See her 'The Entanglement of the Ginans in Khoja Governance', pp. 174-175

[82] For an attempt to 'Hinduize' the *ginan*s among the Imamshahis, one of the subgroups of the Satpanthis, see Khan, 'Rewriting the Ginans', pp. 103-116.

[83] Asani, 'The Ismaili Ginans as Devotional Literature', pp. 108-109.

[84] Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali, *101 Ismaili Heroes* (Karachi, 2003), pp. 99-105.

[85] Ali Muhammad Chunara, preface to first edition, *Nuram Mubin* (2nd ed., Bombay, 1950), p. 7.

[86] Moir, 'Historical and Religious Debates amongst Indian Ismailis 1840-1920', p. 136.

[87] Boivin, 'Ginans and the Management of the Religious Heritage of the Ismaili Khojas in Sindh', pp. 28-36.

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[88] In 1950, a second edition, revised extensively by Jaffer ʿAli Mohammed Sufi (d. 1961), was published by the Ismailia Association for India. Two further editions of the *Nuram Mubin* were published: the third edition appeared in 1951; the fourth, prepared by Sultan Nur Mohammed, was published in 1961.

[89] The following discussion on transnationalization has benefited from Aly Kassam-Remtulla's thesis, '(Dis)placing Khojahs: Forging Identities, Revitalizing Islam and Crafting Global Ismailism' (AB Honors thesis, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University, 1998).

[90] Ibid, p. 96.

[91] For instance, in the late 19th and early 20th century, Aga Khan III encouraged Ismaili Khojas to immigrate to East Africa to search for better economic opportunities after communities in Gujarat were hit by a severe drought and economic depression.

[92] For the transnationalizing impact of the ethic of service among Nizari Ismailis, see Zahra Jamal, 'Transnationalizing Tradition: North American Ismailis Volunteering Abroad', unpublished paper presented at Middle East Studies Association Conference (November, 2006) and her forthcoming dissertation on this topic to be submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University.

[93] *The Constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims* (1986), p. 6.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[96] Ibid., p. 16.

[97] Esmail, 'Satpanth Ismailism', p. 402

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